

A Review of Clarke's Analysis of Drugs and Poisons, 3rd edition

Clarke's Analysis of Drugs and Poisons, 3rd edition, edited by A. C. Moffat, M. D. Osselton and B. Widdop. Volume 1 pp 648, volume 2 pp 1632. London: Pharmaceutical Press; 2003. ISBN 085369 473 7

This two-volume, lengthy and well-regarded toxicology reference work has been updated and supersedes Clarke's second edition, which was nearing the end of its second decade in print. The new edition is also available on a CD-ROM as well as in a handsomely slip-cased print version.

Volume I consists of 31 topical chapters covering a very broad range of topics relevant to the toxicologist, or allied specialists whose work and interests bring them into close contact with toxicological issues. Each chapter is written by an invited expert and range from as few as two to relatively lengthy descriptions of issues, techniques, applications, and developments in forensic toxicology. The span of the material in this section is impressive, including such diverse topics as hospital toxicology, drug abuse in sport, pesticides, and a number of chapters discussing and elucidating particular analytic techniques. The first volume, while stylistically coherent, can be read as a series of discrete topical treatments. So in this sense it combines features of a synoptic text, as well as containing a good amount of imbedded reference material. For example, there is an interesting chapter on impaired automobile driving covering material from field sobriety testing to the mechanisms of breath analyzing instrument which included some discussion of legal issues related to impairment. Likewise, there is a very brief chapter discussing therapeutic drug monitoring, but which is supplemented by a very large bibliography and a well-developed table indicating not only commentary on the importance of monitoring some specific therapeutic drugs, but which of these drugs can be tracked with commercially available assay kits.

The second volume is in the style of a more classic "true reference" work, consisting of nearly 1,200 pages of reference monographs alphabetically organized by compound name. There is, for each listed compound, formulary information, a listing of proprietary names, the dissociation constant and partition coefficient, spectral information, and a series of other relevant information including disposition in the body, therapeutic ranges of concentration, plasma half-life, and similar information. At the end of the second volume are a series of indices, reference information such as molecular weights, molecular formulae CAS numbers and the like. There is also a medical glossary.

Many have described this issue of Clarke's as "eagerly awaited" and it is indeed an impressive work which would be essential to any toxicology laboratory. It is also quite commendable that the material is now available electronically, as this I believe, will increase the speed with which material can be retrieved and is easier to use than the rather hefty tome that constitutes the "hard copy". I would recommend this excellent reference work to any professional toxicologist.

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